

BIBLICAL INSIGHTS #54: UNLOCKING YOUR POTENTIAL

By John Temples

Are you living up to your potential? Are you “being all you can be”? Hardly any of us could say yes. Most of us would readily admit that many times, we let distractions, discouragements, or disabilities keep us from achieving our goals, whether they be financial, physical, mental, or spiritual.

Moses lived some 3,500 year ago, but when we see him in Exodus chapter 3, he was experiencing the same problem: he wasn't living up to his potential. Moses had once been high up in the court of Pharaoh in Egypt, with great advantages and potential; but for forty years he had been living the quiet life of a reclusive shepherd in Midian.

One day a crisis occurred in his life--something from God that would change his life forever. Sometimes it takes a crisis or momentous event to break the cycle of the routine and mundane in our lives. How did God unlock Moses' potential? There is great benefit in studying that process. Read Exodus 3:1-4:

“Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. And he led the flock to the back of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire, but the bush was not consumed. Then Moses said, ‘I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn.’ So when the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, Moses, Moses! And he said, Here I am.”

It's important to note that upon seeing the burning bush, Moses turned aside to investigate it. Only then did God speak to him and begin to act in a new way in his life. Suppose Moses had said (like many of us might say), “Hmmm...that's really interesting. That bush is burning but is not consumed. I'm busy right now, but I

should check that out someday....” Would his life have changed? No. That brings us to lesson #1:

LESSON #1: TO UNLOCK OUR POTENTIAL, WE MUST TURN ASIDE FROM THE ORDINARY AND TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OPPORTUNITIES

Let’s face it: most of life is routine. And no one will blame you if you do just enough to get by--just the basics. But no one will remember you, either!

We need to revive a healthy attitude we had as children: CURIOSITY. Remember, one of the first words you ever learned was *look*. Determine to never stop looking and learning--search out excellence. It was only when Moses turned aside that God spoke to him. Maybe God wants to speak to us (not miraculously, but through Scripture or providence), but He is waiting for us to take the first step--to turn aside from the ordinary.

What else does this account teach us? Here is Exodus 3:6-12:

“[God said to him] I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God. And the Lord said, ‘I have surely seen the oppression of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey.... Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.’ But Moses said to God, ‘Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt? So He said, I will certainly be with you....’”

Moses asked a vital question: *Who am I?* That brings us to...

LESSON #2: TO UNLOCK YOUR POTENTIAL, DO A SELF-ASSESSMENT--TAKE STOCK OF WHO YOU ARE

You are a person made in God's image. As a creation of God, you are unique. No two snowflakes and no two people are exactly the same. You have a unique set of talents, abilities, circumstances, and opportunities that no one else has. There is something you can do--some plan of God for your life--that no other person can do. And as a creation of God, when you undertake to do something good, God will be for you. He will be with you.

It might be instructive for each of us to sit down and fill out a questionnaire about ourselves. Start with "I am..." and write down everything that comes to mind. Other possibilities: "I can...", "I like to...", "I want to..." You might be amazed to read what you have written.

Now come down to Exodus 4:1-5:

"Then Moses answered and said, 'But suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice; suppose they say, The Lord has not appeared to you?' So the Lord said to him, 'What is that in your hand?' And he said, 'A rod.' And He said, 'Cast it on the ground.' So he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it. Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Reach out your hand and take it by the tail' (and he reached out his hand and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand), 'that they may believe that the Lord God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob has appeared to you.'"

The key element here is the Lord's question: "What is that in your hand?" That points to...

LESSON #3: TO UNLOCK YOUR POTENTIAL, TAKE AN INVENTORY OF WHAT YOU HAVE AND LOOK FOR WAYS TO INCREASE ITS VALUE

Think about the important concept of "value added." A piece of paper sells for a penny or so. But write something on it, and suddenly its value can multiply dramatically. A handy person can take an old appliance, car, piece of furniture,

etc. and work on it, and increase its value ten or a hundred fold. By our own labor, and God's blessing, we can take a talent, a relationship, or a life and do the same.

But still Moses was hesitant. He didn't feel up to the task. It's good to be humble, but sometimes you can be too humble. False humility can keep us from being all we can be. Remember, it was the "one-talent" man whom Jesus condemned!

So...God had to get a little rough with Moses:

"Then Moses said to the Lord, 'O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.' So the Lord said to him, 'Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say.' But he said, 'O my Lord, please send by the hand of whomever else You may send.' So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses, and He said, 'Is not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well. And look, he is coming out to meet you. When he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. Now you shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth. And I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and I will teach you what you shall do. So he shall be your spokesman to the people'" (Exodus 4:10-15). This brings us to....

LESSON #4: TO UNLOCK YOUR POTENTIAL, TAKE STOCK OF YOUR WEAKNESSES AND SEEK WAYS TO OVERCOME THEM OR COMPENSATE FOR THEM

Moses could not speak well, but Aaron could. Paul was not much of an exhorter, but Barnabas was.

When it comes to serving God, weaknesses are unimportant. In fact, God prefers to use weak people, because when weak people do great things, God gets the glory and not us. Paul said: "For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God has

chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty, and the base things of the world, and the things which are despised, God has chosen; and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence” (1 Corinthians 1:26-29).

So ask yourself, “Who or what in my life could overcome or counteract a weakness and help me be a blessing to others?”

How did things turn out with Moses? He did obey God and went to Egypt along with Aaron his brother. He boldly approached Pharaoh and delivered to him God’s demands. What was the result?

Exodus 5:1-2—“Afterward Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the Lord God of Israel: Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness.’ And Pharaoh said, ‘Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, nor will I let Israel go.’”

So God told Moses, “Go and tell Pharaoh to let My people go.” He did, and guess what? Pharaoh laughed in his face! That’s...

LESSON #5: TO UNLOCK YOUR POTENTIAL, ANTICIPATE OBSTACLES, EXPECT RESISTANCE, PLAN FOR PROBLEMS, AND OVERCOME THEM

Many of us fail to accomplish much because the first time we encounter an obstacle, we melt and slink away. If the road to success was easy, everybody would be successful!

News flash: life consists of a series of problems to solve and obstacles to overcome. You’re going to be solving problems all your life. An apprentice in a locksmith shop told the owner, “I can’t get my work done for the constant stream of people coming in with keys to be made and problems with locks.” The owner said, “*Son, those problems are your work.*” Trust me: people who can solve problems and overcome difficulties will always be in demand.

One more lesson from Moses is found in Exodus 7:7: “And Moses was eighty years old, and Aaron eighty-three years old, when they spoke to Pharaoh.” That’s...

LESSON #6: WHEN IT COMES TO THE MATTER OF UNLOCKING YOUR POTENTIAL, AGE IS IRRELEVANT

Moses was 80 when God called him and 120 when he finished his task. Joseph was a teenager when he was sold into Egypt. Don’t “despise your youth” or bewail your old age. The only time you don’t have any potential for doing good is when you’re dead.

So remember these lessons from Moses:

- To unlock your potential, be willing to step outside of the ordinary. Be curious. Take advantage of opportunities to learn and grow.
- To unlock your potential, overcome false humility. Realize your power and worth as a unique creation of God. No one has the exact same talents and opportunities you do.
- To unlock your potential, analyze what you have to work with and cultivate the principle of “value added.”
- To unlock your potential, take stock of your weaknesses and work out ways to compensate for them or overcome them.
- To unlock your potential, expect difficulties and be a problem solver.
- To unlock your potential, remember that age is irrelevant.

Who knows what you can accomplish with God’s help to enrich your own life and bring glory to God your Father? --John Temples